582 614 in Kaitag, and of the Tabassaranians he is able to say: "Up to the present there have been no instances of anyone freely separating himself from his *tukhum*. The people are convinced that such an action would be impossible, unthinkable, certainly the most abominable disgrace imaginable." In the Province of Dargwa (according to Popov) the *tukhum* does not even have the authority to expel an illegitimate member, much less permit a fully-fledged member to separate from the others freely. Of all the provinces in South Daghestan only the adats of Tsakhur admit marriages with outsiders, but only 611 by way of exception. Thus, according to Akhtinian and Rutulian customary law, a sib may marry one of their girls to a groom belonging to another *tukhum*, but only if the groom's sib is in danger of extinction.[66] But even in this extreme case an important *conditio sine qua non* is added: the children born of this marriage must be named not after the father's, but, strangely enough, after the mother's sib.[67]

621 In most cases local exogamy will coincide with consanguineous exogamy, because generally the Caucasian *auls* are sib-villages, that is, inhabited by people with the same family name who consider themselves related to one another. The questions of local exogamy and cross-cousin marriages have still to be investigated by the fieldworker.

Endogamy is not a sign of primitiveness. On the contrary, it thrives where social ranks are of paramount importance.[68] But the Lesghians, as we shall soon learn (*infra*, pp. 61 ff), are virtually classless and therefore endogamy seems out of place. We cannot attribute the practice to Islamism; for Mohammedanism may indeed *permit* consanguineous mating but it does not *prescribe* it. We may therefore rightly expect to find the solution to the riddle in pre-Islamic times.

We have said that the Southern Caucasians are strict exogamists. That is true, but there has been a time when the Georgians, the neighbours of the Lesghian peoples, were endogamists.

In the Georgian chronicles of King Vakhtang, which speak of the times of Nabuchodonosor, we read (after Brosset, *Additions*, p. 31), "Les plus abominable coutumes s'introduisirent, dans les mariages, on n'avait aucun égard à la parenté, on mangeait tout ce qui a vie, on n'ensevelissait point les morts et l'on dévorait les cadavres!"[69] And according to the legend about Alexander's march into the Caucasus as found in the Georgian chronicles (after Brosset, *Histoire de la Géorgie*, I, p. 33): "Étant venu dans le Karthli, il trouve chez tous les Géorgiens des coutumes plus abominables que chez aucun peuple. En effet les mariages et la débauche s'y pratiquaient sans égard à la parenté, on mangeait de tout ce qui avait vie, on dévorait les cadavres."[70] Moreover, Tacitus (*Annales*, xii. 46) gives us a good example of a next-of-kin marriage in a Georgian royal family in Iberia. Moses of Chorene (iii, 20) and Faustus of

[66] M. Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, pp. 144 f.
[67] M. Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 172.
[68] R. Lowie, *Primitive Society*, pp. 16 f.
[69] Cf. O. G. von Wesendonk, "Über georgisches Heidentum," *Caucasica*, I (1924), p. 6.
[70] Cf. Wesendonk, *op. cit.*, 61 f.

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to wife, a change more sensibly felt among pastoral peoples than in any other society.

(5) The virginity test, too, though not restricted to pastoral peoples,[105] is very characteristic of their culture. The North Caucasians, all with only the Chechens as possible exception,[106] still have, or at least have had, the virginity test as an essential part of the wedding. The marriage remained uncertain till the bride passed or failed this examination.

It would certainly be of great interest to discover the meaning of and motive behind this practice. There is, of course, no universal explanation for the custom. What motivated the Nigerian tribes to introduce the practice need not be identical with the motives of the Chinese of Kwangtong or of the tribes of Samoa, of the Sakalavas of Madagascar or of the Slavs.

To understand the Caucasian virginity test we must put aside our Western notions regarding the value of the physical integrity of a bride and try to get behind the mind of the North Caucasian, behind the economic, social, and religious standards of the *Caucasians*.

Negatively stated, the virginity test of the Caucasians is in itself no proof of a high esteem for the *virtue* of chastity, for even if it can be proven that the loss of corporal integrity was caused by an accident, the value of the bride seems not to differ from the girl who lost it through actual illicit intercourse. Among the Akhvakh (Daghestanians) a guest or lover might do to a maiden what he wished provided that the hymen remained intact.[107]

Since the perpetuation of the family property and especially of the family cult depends on legitimate male children, there will always be uncertainty about the fatherhood of the first male child if the hymen is found perforated before the consummation of marriage. The groom's family would be constantly haunted by the thought that a stranger (the first-born male child) may become the head of the family. In a word, the economic and religious importance of the first-born male child may have been responsible for the high esteem for virginity and for the necessity of a proof of virginity on the wedding night.[108]

This attitude toward the inviolateness of the maidenhead has been, no doubt, responsible for many other Caucasian observances. The *kalym*, for example, is much higher for a maiden than a widow or divorcée. This fact, in

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[105] For a large number of examples and bibliography see Briffault, *The Mothers*, III, pp. 333—345. See also Schmidt-Koppers, *Völker und Kulturen*, pp. 209 f.

[106] But even here we do not have a positive proof for the non-existence of the virginity test. Mere silence of older authors is *indicative* of the absence of the practice, but it certainly is no proof. The neighbouring Ossetes, Tartars and Mountain Georgians have the custom too.

[107] An accidental rupture of the hymen is much more frequent in the Caucasus than one might be inclined to believe. From early childhood the girl is obliged to do difficult work, to carry heavy loads, to climb and slide down steep, rocky slopes, covered with briers, etc., which might at any unexpected moment rob the girl of her most valued possession. Dubrovin, after referring to these possibilities, points out that frequent ritual washing, which begins quite early in life, can explain many a case too (*Istorija*, I, i, p. 572). For the practice of the Akhvakh, see *infra*, pp. 181 f.

[108] A similar explanation has been suggested by Briffault for the custom in various parts of the world. In any case, it does explain the practice among the Caucasians.

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essential parallels—characteristic of the Turco-Mongolian family are: the almost complete absence of mother-right and totemistic practices, the emphasis placed on the joint-family and the male members, special rights for the first-born son, importance of the male head of the family and the *patria potestas*, the disadvantageous position of the female sex, blood-feuds, exogamy, the *kalym*, which is usually paid in live-stock, the dread of incest, the severe penalties for sexual offenses, fireplace ceremony at weddings, the high esteem for the bride's virginity, the unusual craving for male children, the importance of the bridal procession, etc.

There is also a religious connection between the North Caucasians, the Indo-Europeans, and the Turco-Mongols, a connection that confirms our claim of the existence of a social connection between the three groups. It is not only the *similarity* of the religions of the three groups that we must keep in mind but also the intimate connection, the *organic* connection, between the nomadic social and religious forms. The solidarity which exists among the members of a sib, the great longing for male children, blood-feuds, the levirate, the *patria potestas*, the wedding custom of walking around the fireplace, and many other practices are fundamentally connected with ancestor worship and cult for the dead. Ancestor worship is one of the essential features of the religion of the Indo-Europeans, the Turco-Mongols, and the North Caucasians. Moreover, among all three groups ancestor worship is linked up with the worship of the fireplace. Another very essential part of the pastoral nomadic religion was the custom of sacrificing horses. W. Koppers has shown the great similarity between the horse-sacrifices of the Indo-European and Altai peoples;[48] R. Bleichsteiner proved beyond question the existence of the practice throughout the highlands of Caucasia.[49] Horse-sacrifices among the Indo-Europeans and the North Caucasians are certainly of Inner Asiatic origin.

Thus we see that even though the North Caucasians are not pastoral nomadic in the economic sense—the economy of the steppes is impossible in the mountains, especially in the unfertile valleys of the Caucasus—they are pastoral nomadic in their social organization. *A connection between the North Caucasian society and that of Inner Asia is beyond question.*

3. Vestiges of More Ancient Cultures In the Marriage and Family Customary Laws of the North Caucasians

As is only natural, the deeper we delve into the history of the marriage and family *adats* the more obscure the history becomes.

First of all there are the so-called mother-right vestiges which we must consider. It is interesting to note that the intensity of these vestiges among the three different groups of Caucasians (Northwestern, Northeastern, and Southern)

[48] W. Koppers, *op. cit.*, pp. 12 f, 18—22. See also W. Koppers, "Pferdeopfer und Pferdekult der Indogermanen," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 280—411.

[49] "Rossweihe und Pferderennen im Totenkult der kaukasischen Völker," *Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik*, IV (1936), pp. 412—495.

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562 611 seems to be inversely proportional to the intensity of pastoral traits in the given group: the Southern Caucasians possess by far more vestiges of a mother-right culture than the Northerners; and again, the Northeasterners possess more of these vestiges than the Northwesterners.

It is of course difficult to determine just what one may call a mother-right trait and what not. Some of the practices we shall now review briefly are therefore only doubtfully vestiges of such a culture; others must be considered as good indications of such a culture; finally, others, I think, can be called genuine vestiges.

(1) *Before delivery a Cherkess woman goes to her own mother's house to give birth to her child;* her husband may not visit her during this time.[50]

(2) Our chapter on marital, parental, and kinship avoidances contains a number of possible vestiges, especially *the temporary return of the bride to her family after the wedding* and the temporary *visit-marriage*.[51]

(3) Then there is the *important part played by the mother in the wedding customs* of the mountaineers,[52] which we termed "suspiciously matriarchal." The Lesghian mother (not father!) welcomes the bride into the house, as if she were the head of the family. It is the mother who holds the bride's hand as she crosses the threshold. It is the maternal uncle who has led the bride's horse in the Ingiloian bridal procession from the bride's home to that of the groom. It is the mother who puts the honey into the mouth of the bride as a sign that she has a sweet life ahead of her under such an amiable mistress. And it was the mother who, by presenting the engagement gifts, concluded the betrothal contract.

(4) If a *murderer kills a pregnant woman he is obliged to pay an additional* fine of Rs. 30 to the victim's (not husband's) sib; the Rs. 30 are perhaps for the loss of the unborn child, who formerly belonged to the mother's sib.[53]

(5) The *mother of the girl recieves a horse as part of the Ossetine*[54] *and Temirgoian*[55] *bride price.*

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[50] Bleichsteiner ("Kaukasische Völker," *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, VI, p. 259 f) accepts this custom as a true vestige; Ladyženskij (FT, p. 188) rejects it. In our opinion the practice may be rightly looked upon as a *possible*, though not absolutely certain, vestige. In his translation of Ladyženskij's article Dirr adds a note, disagreeing with the author: "Ganz so einfach liegt wohl die Sache nicht. Die Mutter konnte ja auch zu ihrer Tochter kommen." In other words, Dirr objects that if the only reason for the return of the expectant mother to her family were merely to receive the necessary assistance at childbirth, as Ladyženskij believes to be the case, then why does not the mother come to her daughter's home instead? Ladyženskij takes up the question again and defends his position in a subsequent article ("Zur Erforschung der Rechtsgewohnheiten der Bergvölker des Kaukasus," *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, XLII [1930], pp. 238 f). He argues that it is simply impossible for the mother to go to her daughter's home: in the first place, she must stay at home, being the mistress of the household; in the second place, it is strictly prohibited by custom for her to live at the home of her son-in-law at any time whatsoever. This answer to Dirr's objection is certainly insufficient: if the daughter actually returned to her family merely because she needs help at childbirth, it would seem rather strange that she could not get this necessary assistance at her own home from her mother-in-law or her sisters-in-law.

[51] *Supra*, pp. 165 ff.

[52] *Supra*, pp. 124, 128.

[53] *Supra*, p. 139.

[54] *Supra*, p. 87. The horse is called *madi-bash*.

[55] Vasil'kov, "Očerk byta temirgoevcev," SMOMPK, XXIX (1901), p. 91.

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(6) The *maternal uncle* appears on the scene in marriage and family affairs as an important figure. A special part of the bride price (*madi-arvadai-kal*) of the Ossetes is reserved for the maternal uncle.[56] Among the Ingushi and a number of other tribes in North Caucasia, if someone drinks to the health of his friend's sister and then gives him a present, the friend is obliged to arrange a marriage between his sister and his friend, otherwise a blood-feud will be the result. This custom, as we have said, overrules even the invjolable *patria potestas* and all the *adats* regarding the choice of mates. It is, as it were, an acceptance of the bride price by the brother (" maternal uncle ") without handing the bride over to the purchaser.[57] Moreover, an Ingush lad, after reaching the age when he is allowed to carry arms, has a right to a special present from his maternal uncle. In fact, the youth may go and steal the present with impunity, because he has a *right* to it.[58] This, I think, may very easily be a vestige of a former inheritance rule through the maternal uncle.[59] The Khevsur orphan automatically falls to the guardianship of the maternal uncle.[60] Kovalevskij conjectures that the Georgian institution known as *tsatsali*[61] may be a vestige of the custom to adopt a maternal uncle.[62]

Kovalevskij, Post and other ethnologists of the 19th century " found " an astoundingly large number of " undeniable " vestiges of a former matriarchal culture in the Caucasus. Any custom that would fit into the false principle " mater certa, pater incertus " was " infallibly " a matriarchal vestige. Thus the *atalyk*,[63] the taboos forbidding a father to carry his own child, the prohibition for anyone to ask about the health of another person's wife or child, etc.[64] were all " vestiges " of former matriarchy. The Cherkess *tleush*[65] and the Ingush *taipa*[66] were likewise " vestiges." Kovalevskij's article " La famille matriarcale au Caucase "[67] is a typical example of the matriarchy mania under which the scientists of the past century laboured. Every now and then they would come across a true vestige or a possible indication of matriarchy or mother-right, and these we have incorporated in the present work. The other " vestiges " we have rejected and offered other, more plausible explanations and interpretations.

Russian interest in the problem of mother-right has again been revived. The Russian ethnologist maintains that matriarchy was universal at one time: it was a stage through which all civilizations had to pass, while patriarchy is only

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[56] *Supra*, p. 87.

[57] *Supra*, p. 101. A Berže, Čečnja i čečency, p. 98; Leontovič, II, pp. 251 f, § 149; Kovalevskij, " La famille matriarcale au Caucase," *L'Anthropologie*, IV (1893), pp. 271 f.

[58] Jakovlev, *Ingušı*, p. 47.

[59] This seems to be a genuine vestige.

[60] Kovalevskij, *op. cit.*, p. 273. The maternal uncle also plays an important part in the Khevsurian blood-feuds (Hahn, *Aus dem Kaukasus*, p. 273).

[61] *Supra*, p. 182.

[62] Kovalevskij, *l. c.*

[63] *Supra*, p. 57.

[64] *Supra*, pp. 149 f, 162—167.

[65] *Supra*, p. 55.

[66] *Supra*, p. 84.

[67] *L'Anthropologie*, IV (1893), pp. 259—278. See also Kovalevskij's *Zakon*, I, pp. 3—27.

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611 a further development of this stage with the avunculate as a link between
114 matriarchy and patriarchy.[68] Although the modern Soviet ethnologist is very cautious about what he terms "matriarchal," it is the universality of matriarchy that must be rejected as unfounded.

174 Linguists, especially of the Marr School, have pointed out other vestiges of
611 mother-right in the Caucasus, thus confirming our ethnological argument.[1]

Prehistory too might be able to offer some valuable data, but unfortunately the prehistorian has no way of establishing a connection between his discoveries and the culture of any North Caucasian people. Nevertheless, we can use the prehistorical data at least as a negative argument: the prehistorical discoveries do not exclude the existence of an older, more or less strong mother-right influence. On the contrary, the finds confirm such an opinion. The Copper Age discoveries of the Nalchik, Kuban, and the Kuban-Terek stages point to a society with a matriarchal sib organization.[69]

In other words, we cannot deny the existence of so-called mother-right vestiges, but compared to the numerous typically pastoral nomadic traits in the marriage and family customary laws of the North Caucasians they are quite rare. Nevertheless, the mother-right vestiges are sufficient in number to be a good indication that the family organization was much more matriarchal prior to the influences from Inner Asia than afterwards.[70]

We may ask ourselves the following two important questions: Why are the northwestern marriage and family *adats* the most "pastoral nomadic," the southern the least so, while the northeastern occupy a middle position? Why should the number of so-called mother-right traits be found in the three groups precisely in the reverse order? Caucasology is still too young to allow anyone to venture upon a final and complete solution. Here too we are able to offer only a partial solution.

174 The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIANS. The true origin of the Cherkess is uncertain. It seems that at one time they were a powerful pastoral people, occupying a vast area, the entire North Caucasian foreland and a large sector of southeastern Europe. The Cherkess legends frequently refer to the steppes, to customs and usages of a distinctly steppe culture.[71] Later on their relations with the various nomadic peoples in this region, especially with the Scythians, Sarmatians, Alans—not to mention the more recent relations with the Ossetes and Turco-Mongols—were by far closer than were those of the other Caucasians. This hypothetical origin and economic life of the Cherkess

[68] Cf. M. O. Kosven, "Avunkulat," SE, 1948, No. 1, pp. 1—46. Also the following by the same author: "Perežitki matriarchata u narodov Kavkaza," SE, 1936, No. 4—5, pp. 211 ff; *Matriarchat, Istorija Problemy*, Izkatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, Moskva-Leningrad, 1948, 329 pages; "Ob archivnych materialach po etnografii SSSR," SE, 1936, No. 1, pp. 132—135. See also H. P. Dyrenkova, "Perežitki materinskago roda u altajskich tjurkov," SE, 1937, No. 4, pp. 18—45.

[69] See Table 4.

[70] It is interesting to note that the last two stages of the Caucasian Copper Age (the Kuban and the Kuban-Terek stage) begin to show a distinct rise of male importance through leadership in trade, religion, metallurgy, and cattle-breeding.

[71] R. Bleichsteiner, "Kaukasische Völker," *Reallexikon der Vorgeschichte*, VI, p. 253.

1 [Cf. cat. 116, pp. 199 f. -- Analyst]